

LACDMH Helps Public Get Ready For Disasters At Preparathon Day Event

By H. Chung So, Public Information Officer II



On Sept. 30, 2016, LACDMH joined other county departments and community partners for a Preparathon Day fair at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital to educate the public about disaster preparedness and response.

The fair had numerous booths with outreach staff and volunteers ready to answer questions, perform live demonstrations and provide materials about getting disaster ready. This included information and resources on developing a disaster response plan, learning how to check smoke detectors and shut off utilities, building a well-stocked emergency kit and maintaining a list of reliable contacts.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who hosted the fair, stressed the importance of these preparations at the event's press conference.

"Knowing what to do and what not to do would make a difference in the event of a natural or man-made disaster," Ridley-Thomas said.

In addition to getting ready physically, Ana Maria De La Torre, Ph.D., LACDMH Assistant Department Emergency Coordinator, highlighted the importance of mental preparedness as well.

“Panicking can lower your ability to perform optimally,” De La Torre said, adding that staying calm can “improve your ability to make decisions” during or after a disaster.

To help manage disaster-related stress, De La Torre advises people to:

- Strive for and maintain a positive outlook
- Stay hydrated and eat healthy foods
- Try to get normal amounts of sleep
- Limit caffeine and alcohol consumption
- Moderate exposure to disaster-related news coverage
- Maintain contact with social networks and support systems

People with medical conditions – including mental health diagnoses – should also keep a list of their medications and their care provider’s contact information in their emergency kits.

And in cases of overwhelming stress and anxiety following a disaster, De La Torre suggested getting crisis counseling or service referrals by calling LACDMH’s ACCESS hotline at (800) 854-7771 or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Disaster Distress Helpline at (800) 985-5990.

For more information, tips and resources on emergency preparedness, visit the county’s emergency website at <http://www.lacounty.gov/emergency>.



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